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Good Governance: Expectations and Challenges

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Abstract

The concept of governance was decisively shaped by the aspirations of founding fathers of the Constitution. The constitution of our country is governed by certain values which are shared by the people and the government. The commitment to the values enshrined in our constitution greatly influences the quality of governance in our country. These values are those of nationalism, democracy and secularism. There are two features that tend to add to the difficulties in governing the country. The political institutions since 1970 have progressively shown their inability to respond to society's changing concerns. They have become inefficient and immune to social demands. Political leadership has also given its own push in this direction by undermining them in their eagerness to private profiteering and/or personal domination. This is so much true of governmental institutions as of political parties. The other major change has been political awakening among all sections of society including both prosperous and disadvantaged groups. The result is that people are now more politically conscious, more dominant and more impatient with other social groups and with governments that do not respond adequately to their rising expectations and demands and because of such an awakening among the masses it has more difficult to govern the country at time when political degradation has seriously damaged the image and status of government". Because of the above mentioned factors the concern for good governance is catching attention of policy makers, political leadership and the people at large. Good governance, means securing justice, empowerment, employment and efficient form of government. The need is to formulate a national policy that restores the image and status of the government in the eyes of the citizens by making the government accountable for its actions by ushering the era of good governance for the betterment of our nation.

Keywords: Good governance, Challenges, Expectations and National values.

Introduction

The citizens of countries all the world over look forward towards the nation and its administrative machinery for good management and efficient administration. When good governance is guaranteed, the people of the nation go about their routine business and pursuits with enhanced expectations. On the other hand inefficient and poor governance not only limits the opportunities of success but it can even degenerate into sectarian conflicts and civil wars. In such an atmosphere individual accomplishments as well as achievements of the society get severely restricted. Good governance helps to create an environment in which sustained economic growth becomes achievable but in our society political pressures dominate economic policy decision making and execution leading to misallocation of resources and misappropriation of the funds. Corruption, red tapism and favouritism influences the distribution of licenses, resulting in the award of government contracts to the big multi national companies. As a result our government machinery is increasingly used to serve personal interests. Such a state is classified as a predatory state and the problem that is posed is how to create conditions that such a state moves on to become a development state in which resources are invested for the good of the society and nation as a whole.

Good governance does not occur by chance. It is also the responsibility and moral duty of the citizens to stand up for their rights and make persistent efforts to attain them. It is, therefore, necessary that the citizens should themselves come forward to guard their rights and participate freely and make active contributions in the democratic set up of the country. The citizens must have the right to stand in elections, form political party and enjoy fundamental rights and civil liberty. It is only then they can make political leadership as well as bureaucracy accountable. The presence of a strong civil society including a free press, social media and independent judiciary are pre-conditions for good governance.

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Rule of Law

The concept of good governance is undoubtedly linked with the citizens' freedom of speech and enjoyment of basic fundamental rights given in a democratic set up. This is possible in a democracy only through the enforcement of the rule of law. The rule of law is expressed through the axiom that no one is above the law. In our constitutional system, every person is equal before the law without the distinction of caste, creed and colour. No person whether rich or poor can be deprived of his fundamental rights and privileges except according to the procedure established by law. Thus the state government is bound to safeguard the life and interests of every human being.

Need for Empowerment of the socially backward classes

There is urgent need for the empowerment of the socially backward classes and disadvantaged groups' keeping in consideration the principle that poor people have to be the prime target of development programmes and principal agency for development. The involvement of poor women in micro-financing institutions of SEWA in Gujarat or in self-help groups in Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu has clearly established that they not only understand financial systems but also repay their loans on time. In short, the poor women have demonstrated that they can outperform all other customers in profitability. Our Constitution is committed to two different set of principles that have a decisive bearing on equality.

First, is the principle of equal opportunities to all and the second, the principle of redressal of educational and social backward classes. The social and political climate of the country has radically changed over the past few decades. However, notwithstanding, an increasing role of the market and the NGOs as institutions of modernization and progress in the country, the state continues to have a leading say in transformation of society to make it just and equal. The question is, not only of the extent to what reservation in Government employment can really change things for the better, but how it could, in order to benefit the economically weaker sections of the society and socially disadvantaged groups.

Capacity Building

Capacity building at all levels of an organization is to be considered as the most important approach for the achievement of quality of services and customer's satisfaction. In a democratic country like us decentralization of power is necessary to empower people in rural and urban areas to improve their lot. The empowerment of administrative machinery would bolster the confidence and enable more individuals even outside the bureaucracy to come forward to handle community needs and enhance public good effectively without hesitancy or the need of approval by higher level authorities.

The concept of capacity building in public administration relies heavily upon professionalism and ethics of our public servants. There is increasing awareness about the low level of professional quality of public servants employed in districts and in rural areas. Resistance to the capacity building programme comes from the staff as well as from the supervisor. People normally do not like change. There is also a general trend among the people to think that capacity building means increase in work-load. Resistance also comes from supervisors and managers who often perceive that staff

capacity building would lead to reduction of their own powers. The most crucial element in capacity building is leadership. Good leadership aimed at the overall improvement of working culture in the organization is the pivot to capacity building.

Capacity building does not mean that the staff has full freedom to define what they will do – when, where and how. This is obviously wrong. Capacity building is aimed at making the staff to behave in a responsible manner and produce desired results. It means a collaborative effort in which an individual or an organization could be made accountable and held responsible for any action and decisions that they take. The right to obtain information, effective participation of workers at the lower level and accountability are needed to create conditions necessary for capacity building. In traditional organizations, information is the preserve of higher level bureaucracy. This system needs to be decentralised to allow people to access the information they need to perform their task.

Criminalisation of Politics

The entry of people with criminal background into the political set up and the nexus between politicians, bureaucrats, and big multi national companies are having a negative impact on public policy formulation and governance. The respect for the political system of the country is diminishing very fast in the eyes of common man. Our country is facing a serious threat to its sovereignty and considerable challenge to its authority from the anti social elements. The terrorism in Jammu & Kashmir has rampantly spread its roots to other parts of India, the militancy problem in the North-East, and rapid growth of the naxalites in India is constituting a grave threat to the security of the country and its democratic set up. Fortunately, one sees national consensus against jihadi terrorism and it is the moral duty of the citizens of our country to take action and deal firmly with this menace and nip the evil in its bud. Insurgency in India's North-East is largely confined now to Nagaland, Manipur and Assam and these are being tackled by democratically elected state governments with full support from the Centre. Of late, one sees a political resolve to deal with naxalites as well. Dialogue process alone would provide the final answer but in every eventuality the nation has to be firm in order that it discharges its basic responsibility of protecting life and property of its citizens.

The intrinsic factors pose an even bigger threat to India's democratic governance in the form of criminals and musclemen who are entering into state legislative assemblies and Parliament in sizeable numbers. A political culture seems to be taking roots in which membership of state legislatures and Parliament are viewed as offices for seeking private gain and for making money. Such elements are likely to tarnish the image of the society and nation as a whole. The Gandhian values of simple living and self-less service to public causes are rapidly vanishing. The dictum that 'howsoever high, the law is above you' is sought to be replaced by rule of men. It is true that public is not a dumb spectator to this phenomenon nor is the media. The judicial system of our country has succeeded in sending some of the corrupt legislators and ministers to jail. But new methods and loopholes have also been found to fiddle away with the law enforcement agencies. Criminals who are facing prosecution eventually get bail and even go scot-free.

Corruption: A very high level of corruption in India is commonly considered as a major obstacle in improving the quality of governance. The basic greedy nature of the human beings is obviously the root cause of corruption menace, but it is also due to the poor law enforcement system by the agencies in our country to punish the corrupt people that have contributed to the rising graph of corruption in India. The inappropriate attitude of the officials and non-transparent system of bureaucracy, monopoly of the government as a service provider, underdeveloped legal framework, and lack of information regarding citizens' rights have added fuel to the fire in the growth of the corruption menace in India.

A nation wide programme for strengthening of public awareness and also empowering the existing anti-corruption agencies would be required. The bringing up of the right to information act has been one of the most significant reforms in public administration. The Right to Information Act can play a very significant role in making the people conscious about their rights. Accordingly, basic reforms in file management, transparency in government rules and regulations, provision of public expenditure review could provide the concerned citizens the relevant information to make the service providers accountable. This would help in ensuring the fact that that the resources which belong to people are used in a judicious and effective manner.

Conclusion

It is being widely appreciated that good governance is dependant not merely upon good policy advices but more importantly on the processes and incentives to design and implement good policies themselves. The institutions which are showing poor performance despite having good infrastructure are increasingly seen to be at the heart of the economic development challenge. The disproportionate allocation of the resources, too much interference on the part of the government have resulted in steep rise in the graph of corruption. The ineffective institutions of governance are likely to make an adverse impact on the delivery of efficient services to the people. Poverty reduction depends on improvements in the quality and timely delivery of services to poor people of basic education, health, potable water and other social and infrastructure requirements. The major challenge is to put in place institutional arrangements for service delivery that are workable in a particular district or a region and are made to function in a manner that are intelligible to the local people and that also encourages them to participate. These institutions are likely to be responsive to the local needs of its citizens and will be reasonably efficient in the delivery of public services.

Women are likely to play the significant role and the main link to good governance. With the increase in active participation of the women in democratic institutions, stability has started coming gradually in the Indian political scenario. Women can bring positive and constructive solutions to the various problems of the country. The participation in economic programmes by the women needs to be taken up seriously for in women we get expendable providers, educators, caretakers and leaders. In view of deep-rooted social and economic inequities in the social fabric of our country over a long period of time, India should not follow capitalist model of growth blindly because such a model would fail to provide stability keeping in view the political system of our country but rapid growth in the

economic sector is essential for providing employment opportunities to the youth of the country.

Keeping in view the above mentioned circumstances, the people sitting in the planning commission offices need to think analytically and formulate plans and policies that secures both fast growth and an approach that combines Gandhian ethics with democratic set up of our country.

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